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Maricopa

The North American Indian

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The Indians of the United States and Alaska

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/81/

The Maricopa

Customs, Arts, and Beliefs

101 131 The Maricopa are a small tribe of Yuman stock living as neighbors of the Pima, chiefly in the valley of the Gila in southern Arizona, though a few make their home on the Salt River reservation east of Phoenix. Maricopa, Yuma, and Mohave tra-
101 173 dition, while vague on the subject, relates that the Maricopa once lived on the Colorado river between the Mohave and the Yuma. Possibly they were a part of the latter, rather than a separate tribe. Enemies of both the Yuma and the Mohave, they were gradually forced from their home country to the Gila and up that stream. Their removal from the Colorado to their pres-
[167] ent home was not accomplished at one time, but represented a
[648] series of movements up the Gila, until eventually an alliance was made with their old-time enemies, the Pima -- an alliance of great benefit to both tribes, for it enabled them more successfully to resist the marauding Apache. The Maricopa separation was much more recent than that of the Havasupai and Walapai
[144] from the parent body, for the Maricopa still bear close physical resemblance to their Yuma and Mohave kindred. Furthermore, the mythology of the Maricopa also indicates comparatively recent association with these two tribes. When noted by Father Garcés, in 1775, they had not progressed farther eastward than Gila Bend.

177 The mythological, ceremonial, and religious concepts of the Maricopa, although primarily Yuman, show some effect of their close contact with the Pima. In mode of living they are much like their neighbors, and show few traces of their Yuman ancestry. /82/ Morally, too, they differ widely from the Yuma, being exceedingly strict, while the latter are notoriously lax. The
[285] Pima type of dwelling was adopted by them, and their knowledge of basketry evidently came from the same source, for this art, although exhibiting somewhat greater skill in execution, shows identity in form, design, and material with that of the Pima.
323 They make a great deal of pottery: large jars for storing water
415 in the houses, smaller ones for carrying water on the head, and
[482] cooking pots of many sizes.

/82 cont./

000 cooking pots of many sizes.

From the Pima they also learned to weave cloth from
291 native cotton. The dress of the women formerly consisted of a
[177] piece of this cloth wound around the body under the arms and reaching to the knees, with an outer shawl for cold weather.
[302] The men wore only the breech-cloth, but painted their bodies elaborately.

The Maricopa, of course, possessed the same wealth of
262 native vegetal and animal foods as the Pima, and employed the same methods of gathering and treating them. The fruit of the giant cactus, found in unlimited quantities, is still one of their important staples. This strange creation of the plant world blooms in early spring and ripens its fruit in June and July. Using a long
[222] pole with a wooden blade at the end, the women cut the fruit from the plant and carry it to the settlements in large baskets. The
[252] fruit is eaten fresh, dried, made into jelly, or preserved. They
273 also make quantities of wine from it, first boiling the fruit, then draining the juice into large jars, which are kept in a heated house for a week to ferment. A number of women, sometimes twenty-
[476] five or more, formerly joined in making wine, and when it was
[574] ready their neighbors were invited to a great feast, which always ended in a debauch. This deplorable custom, along with many of a commendable nature, was derived from the Pima.

241 The Maricopa are a sedentary, agricultural people. The
[252] principal crop of their small irrigated farms is wheat, which they
[412] grind into coarse flour on the metate, or hand mealing stone.

582 /83/ The little that remains of their former social organization indicates that it was identical with that of the Mohave. Nothing could be learned tending to show that under this system marriage within recognized groups of kindred was prohibited. The union
584 was without ceremony, and formal consent of the parents was not necessary; if they did not send the young man away, it was assumed that they were willing to accept him as a son-in-law.

[764] As among other Yuman tribes, the dead are burned. Within
765 a few days after the cremation of the body of an important man a mourning ceremony, called Nyimich, is observed. Fuel is heaped up to form a pyre, on which are placed pieces of clothing of each of the near relatives of the deceased. The men march around the pyre shouting and crying, followed by the women carrying

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765 baskets of grain on their heads. In passing around the third time, the women throw the grain upon the pyre. The fire is then kindled, and everyone wails as long as it continues to burn.

The medicine-men, like those of other Yuman tribes,
756 claim, and fully believe, that through dreams they have ac-
[787] quired the divine gift of healing disease. In their treatment of
755 a patient two eagle feathers are held in the right hand and a gourd rattle in the left. The feathers are waved over the body to drive the evil from the head to the feet, for sickness is believed to pervade the whole body, not merely a portion of it. Alternating with the feathers the rattle is used to accompany the singing. While waving the feathers the medicine-man blows across the patient's body, to drive away the evil spirits. At
[533] intervals he recounts in a falsetto chant the story of the dreams through which he received his power. The songs last all night, and the treatment usually continues for four nights, but may be shortened if the patient recovers, or extended if the case de-
787 mands it. The Maricopa attach much the same importance to dreams as do the Mohave. So great is their faith in the revelations derived from them that to wish a friend "good luck" in the Maricopa language one must say /84/ "good dreams"—
756 sumashnhót. An exemplification of the nature of the supernatural
787 instruction claimed by the doctors is given in the following narra-
159 tion of the head medicine-man of the Maricopa:

"One night when I was a boy about five years of age, Tinyám, the Darkness, came to me in the form of a man, and said, 'Go see!' I went to the north and there saw a great many people. Darkness showed me the whole earth and the names of the different mountains. Then Buzzard came for me. He took me straight down to where the animal people were, and called to them, 'Look at this boy and have a good feeling for him; give him dreams, that he may cure the sick and make his people well.' So every kind of bird gave me a dream and strength. Kapít, the Tuftle, sat down beside a sick man and breathed upon him. Soon the sick man began to breathe regularly. Then Kapít told me to try this, and I did as he had done. When the animal people saw this, they wept for joy; and Buzzard said, 'That will be enough here; I shall take you to another place.'

/84 cont./

159 756 787 "So he took me a little way and told me to look at a distant house in which lived Little Cricket. When we came to the house, Hayún, the Cricket, was in bed. Buzzard awakened him, saying, 'Cricket, look at this little boy; give him some dreams and show him how to heal sick people.' 'Good!' exclaimed Hayún; 'bring him in and I shall show him how I cure.' We entered, and Cricket said, 'Now, Boy, it is night, but you see that my house is light. You are the only person who has come to my home, and I am glad to welcome you. I shall show you how to heal the sick.' As he sat there it was light as day, because of his eagle feathers. He stroked his own body and then mine with the feathers, thus imparting his power to me. And Buzzard said it was well. 'Now,' said Cricket, 'I have given you my strength, which you are to use. When a sick man is lying down, use these feathers as I have shown you, and there will be light on the sick man and not the darkness of disease. You will see the sickness and drive it away.'

/85/ "Buzzard then took me to a mountain, saying, 'Qastamhaíkus, the Little Lizard, lives here, and he also will give you power. You cannot see him now, but when we enter his house you will see a famous man of great power.' He led me in, and I saw Lizard. 'Look at this boy,' said Buzzard, 'and give him medicine power. Give him no evil power, only good, as many others have done.' 'Very well,' said Lizard, 'he is a fine boy and I shall do as you ask.' So saying, he made an image of a sick man and laid it down. There we three sat, I beside Lizard, looking at the image while Lizard was using his power. Then he said, 'You try to do this.' So I sat down and did the same as he had done, and when I had finished, he put the feathers on my hand, giving it the power of the feathers.

"Next we went down to the ocean, where we found Hailkotát, a sea monster. I looked at the creature, but I did not know him. Hailkotát said, 'You are a good boy. This is the first time anyone has come here, and for your bravery I shall reward you with my power.' 'You must give him only good power,' said Buzzard. Then Hailkotát took his feathers, blew upon my body and gave me his strength. When he had finished, he said, 'Now,

/85 cont./

159 Boy, you must never do evil things; use this power well.' 'What
756 can he do with a sick person?' asked Buzzard. 'He will heal
787 various diseases, for I shall give him strength of two kinds.'
He blew upon my body from the middle to the head and from the middle to the feet, thus giving both kinds of power for curing all illness. Buzzard then took me to my home, and my parents knew not of my absence. They thought I had been sleeping in my bed. But my body only was in bed while my spirit was making these journeys. I kept these things to myself, and when I grew older and saw a man dying of sickness with no one to help him, I thought it time to use my medicine power. Everybody knew then that I was a medicine-man."

/86/ Creation Myth

The Earth was the mother and the Sky the father. Two
773 children, yet unborn, moved westward under the earth, seeking the place whence they were to issue, but they did not find it. Then they moved east, south, and north, and at last found the place. The first to be born was Thoshipá. Kokomát soon followed, first having called to the other to know if he had come out with his eyes open or shut. "With my eyes open," answered Thoshipá falsely. So Kokomát came forth with his eyes open, and the salt water running into them made him blind; for the earth was then covered with water.

As soon as they were born, they began to sing of what they were to do. Thoshipá cut the hair from his temples and twisted a little rope, which he laid before him; immediately the water dried up, leaving a vast expanse of mud, so the creator made ants, which bored holes and brought up dry earth. Then the two brothers decided it was time to make human beings. Said Kokomát, "We will stand back to back, I to the west and you to the east, and make men." So they did. After a while Thoshipá asked, "In what form are you creating men?" When Kokomát exhibited his creatures, Thoshipá discovered that they had webbed hands and other deformities, and he objected. "Men must not have webbed hands," said he, "for they will need fingers to point with and to

/86 cont./

773 pick up things." "They will need webbed hands to dip up water to drink," was Kokomát's answer. The other insisted also that they be given minds, to know how to use their hands, and Kokomát, becoming angry, threw his clay images into the water and they became ducks and other web-footed creatures. Then Kokomát sank down into the ground; but first, in his anger, he struck the sky and broke it, so that Thoshipá, to keep it from crushing his people, had to support it with his hand at the north, [821] where we still see the marks of his fingers in one of the groups of stars. /87/ Kokomát lay under the ground and became very ill and thin. He rubbed himself, and the sickness flew into the air, turning into birds of many kinds. Then he moved toward the [823] ocean, and said, "Here I lie forever; but whenever I turn over there will be a shaking of the earth and the people will know that Kokomát is moving."

Thoshipá proceeded to make people, placing them in rows, one row for each tribe that was to be, and when all the rows were finished he blew on them from the feet to the head, twice, and life came into their bodies. He gave them languages, each [829] different from the other's, and the last one was the Chemehuevi. By the time he reached their row it was night, and he could not work so well as in the light, so that now no one can understand a Chemehuevi.

The people were left romping about like children. They played games and swam in the water. One of them said, "Thoshipá has a snake; let us send for it and play with it." So a man was sent to bring back the snake, and they played with it, throwing it about and treating it very roughly. At the end of the day they took the snake back. Thoshipá was angry because they had treated it so badly, so digging into the earth, he took gravel, chewed it, and made fangs for the snake. Next day the man returned for the snake, and, taking it up, was bitten. He cried out to Thoshipá that the snake had bitten him, but the creator gave no heed, and the man started back, dying before he could reach his people. When they saw this man dead, they asked each other how he happened to be without life, and learned that the snake had poisoned him. Thoshipá told the people to wrestle and kick each other, and they did so. Then he told them to fight with

/87 cont./

773 poles and sticks, and finally to make bows and arrows, and with several men on each side to fight and shoot one another. That night many men were lying wounded and dying, for Thoshipá was angry with them on account of their mistreatment of his snake.

Hanyé, the Frog, was a powerful witch, and the people told her to give poison to Thoshipá. The Frog asked them what Thoshipá /88/ did in the night, and they answered that he had a long pole near the ocean, up which he climbed every night. So she went under the ocean, and one night, when Thoshipá was on the top of the pole and vomiting, Hanyé swallowed the discharge and blew it back into his mouth, thus poisoning him. When he became sick, Thoshipá directed the people to make a house. After three attempts that resulted in imperfect structures, they succeeded in building a round, earth-covered house, in which they laid the god. Before leaving his children he instructed them
764 how they were to burn his body, telling them they should always
773 observe the same custom when one of their number died. When the people saw that Thoshipá was dying, they cried bitterly. The creator told his people about the moons, and what time of the year was proper for the planting of various crops, giving to each new moon a name. As he began to name the second six, he died. Then the men made a pile of wood for burning the god, and after it was finished carried the body toward the place of the pyre, laying it down twice on the way, and the third time on the pyre itself. Thus arose the custom of burning the dead. When pyre and body had been consumed, they buried the ashes in the sand and left the place, migrating to the south of the Mohave, where they made their home on the bank of the river Havil, the Colorado.